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November 15, 2019

CFHHS Interim Legislative Committee
PO Box 201706
Helena MT, 59620

Dear Chairman Moore and Committee Members:

Thank you all for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) and to testify before you today. Family Support Network has been in existence for 26 years, serving at risk children and families in Yellowstone County. Child Protective Services (CPS) is our main referral source.

We work directly with CPS and children and families that are in the child welfare system or who are at risk of entering the child welfare system. We provide parent education, parent coaching and supervised parenting time in our office and in homes. Family Support Network has an extensive background of working with CPS and we believe we have been good partners.

As you are aware, Yellowstone County has an overburdened child welfare system. But, frustrations stemming from poor communications within the Region 3 CPS offices with both families and stakeholders, delayed dispositions of cases, and lack of service coordination are creating an even more fragile system, hindering the positive outcomes these children deserve.

We recognize that CFSD is attempting to address these issues. Following are three areas they are working on, that give us some hope for positive change.

1. The focus on evidenced based practices for providers working with children and families either in the child welfare system or at risk is an important step in improving service delivery and outcomes.
2. The Family First Prevention Services Act, if properly funded (matching dollars) by the State of Montana, will provide permanent funding for states to make a positive change in the foster care system.
3. The Child and Family Services Division leadership is meeting with stakeholders to improve the communications and solicit input on how to better work together in improving the lives of children and families.



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Moving forward, it is critical that Child and Family Services recognize that we all can go farther by working together, for the betterment of children, families and our communities.

Thank you for your service to Montana and addressing the health and human service needs of those in need. If I can be of any further assistance please contact me at 406-256-7783 or at sbyrne@mtfamilysupport.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Byrne, MSW
Executive Director
Family Support Network